

NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions week ending 22nd January, 2016

Food Banks:

<p>AQW 52839/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Steven Agnew (GPNi - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the use food banks; and to outline the reasons why people need the support of food banks.</p> <p>My Department has undertaken some research to better understand the number of food banks and why people in Northern Ireland are using food banks. A report on the findings of this research, An Insight into Food Banks in Northern Ireland, is available on the DSD internet website.</p>
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Play park funding in Derry:

<p>AQW 52783/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Gary Middleton (DUP - Foyle)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Social Development for a breakdown of funding his Department has provided for play parks in Foyle, since May 2011.</p> <p>Since May 2011, my Department has provided funding of £795,540 towards 4 play parks in Foyle. The table below provides a breakdown of funding allocated to each play park.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="596 1464 1396 1917"> <thead> <tr> <th>Project Name</th> <th>Year</th> <th>DSD Funding</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Lapwing Way Park</td> <td>2012/2013</td> <td>£159,485</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Irish Street Play Park</td> <td>2015/2016</td> <td>£285,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rose Court Play Park</td> <td>2015/2016</td> <td>£285,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fountain Play Park</td> <td>2015/2016</td> <td>£66,055</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Project Name	Year	DSD Funding	Lapwing Way Park	2012/2013	£159,485	Irish Street Play Park	2015/2016	£285,000	Rose Court Play Park	2015/2016	£285,000	Fountain Play Park	2015/2016	£66,055
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Impact in reduction i funding for the Women's Childcare Fund:

<p>AQW 52606/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Ross Hussey (UUP - West Tyrone)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the reduction in funding for the Women's Childcare Fund and the impact this will have on his Department's ability to support this charity.</p> <p>In the context of OFMdfM's Childcare Strategy my predecessor Minister Storey indicated that this would be the last year of funding for the Women's Centres Childcare Fund. OFMdfM officials have now advised that the likely alternative funding measure being brought forward under the Childcare Strategy is unlikely to be in place before April 2017. Accordingly I am currently considering the way forward in terms of the Women's Centres Childcare Fund at this time.</p>
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2014/15 GCSE results:

<p>AQO 9433/11-16</p>	<p>Ms Maeve McLaughlin (SF - Foyle)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to outline the main findings from the most recent statistical bulletin on GCSE results.</p> <p>Recent findings from the bulletin published last month include the following points:</p> <p>In 2014/15, 67.0% of year 12 pupils achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE maths, an increase of 1.8 percentage points from 65.2% in 2013/14.</p> <p>The proportion of free school meal entitled year 12 pupils achieving this standard increased by 6.9 percentage points to 45.6% (from 38.7% in 2013/14). This compares with a 3.5 percentage point increase for non free school meal entitled pupils to 74.3% (from 70.8% in 2013/14).</p> <p>The proportion of non-grammar school year 12 pupils achieving this indicator (5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE maths) increased by 2.8 percentage points to 46.8% (from 44.0% 2013/14) compared with a 0.5 percentage point increase in grammar schools to 95.0% (from 94.5% in 2013/14).</p> <p>While these figures, broken down by school type, represent a performance gap of 48.2 percentage points between grammar and non-grammar pupils, they display a narrowing of the gap by 12.7 percentage points since 2008/09 when the information was first collected.</p>
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		<p>Females continue to outperform their male counterparts but the gap is narrowing. In 2014/15, 70.9% of females achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and maths compared with 63.2% of males. This represents a performance gap of 7.7 percentage points, comparing favourably with an equivalent gap of 8.4 percentage points in 2013/14.</p> <p>The percentage of pupils achieving no GCSEs in 2014/15 was 0.1%.</p>
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Educational arrangements in place for the school-aged Syrian refugees that arrived recently under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.

<p>AQO 9432/11- 16</p>	<p>Ms Anna Lo MBE (APNI - South Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to outline the educational arrangements in place for the school-aged Syrian refugees that arrived recently under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.</p> <p>The Syrian refugee families arrived in mid December close to the end of the school term. Now that the new school term has started, the process for enrolment in schools has begun.</p> <p>There are sufficient school places in the greater Belfast area to accommodate the 14 school-aged Syrian refugee children and the Education Authority is working closely with all partners to ensure that they are able to continue their education here.</p> <p>The Education Authority's Education Welfare Service (EWS) and Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS) have made contact with key workers allocated to the families. Meetings are taking place between the Education Welfare Service, the Syrian families and their key workers to assist them in accessing appropriate educational provision.</p> <p>Information regarding the application process for free school meals and uniform grants is also being made available to the families.</p> <p>Meetings will then be arranged between the families and the schools. The Education Welfare Officer can, if the families consent, approach the schools and accompany the families to the initial meeting with the school.</p> <p>Schools that need additional support can approach the Inclusion and Diversity Service who are well experienced in dealing with newcomer children and helping them to integrate into classrooms here.</p> <p>A range of support materials are already in place within schools to help</p>
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		<p>children from diverse backgrounds and with different home languages to settle in and make the most of their education here.</p> <p>I look forward to welcoming these children and young people into our schools.</p>
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Youth Council NI:

<p>AQO 9431/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education, in light of his announcement of future arrangements for the Youth Council, to outline the proposed budget for regional youth organisations in 2016-17.</p> <p>Following the Executive's agreement of Budget 2016-17 on Thursday 17 December 2015 I am currently working through the impact of the Budget 2016-17 outcome on the Education sector and have not yet come to any final decisions on 2016-17 budget allocations. However, in my written statement to the Assembly on 10 December 2015 I gave an undertaking to earmark the budget for regional voluntary youth work within the Education Authority budget.</p>
<p>AQO 9421/11- 16</p>	<p>Mrs Judith Cochrane (APNI - East Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education for an update on his plans for the future of the Youth Council.</p> <p>I set out my plans for the future of the Youth Council in a written statement to the Assembly on 10 December.</p> <p>Primary legislation is required to repeal the Youth Service (NI) Order 1989. The effect of this legislation will be to wind up the Youth Council. The passage of this legislation will require Executive approval and will of course be subject to the view of the Assembly.</p> <p>I have put in place a Youth Service Reform Programme Board which includes representatives from the Department, the Education Authority and the Youth Council to oversee a number of high level work streams to address the various issues around the new approach to the future administration and funding of regional youth services from April 2016.</p> <p>I am also establishing a Youth Service Reform Partnership, to be chaired by the Department with representatives from the Education Authority, Youth Council, Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations and the NI Youth Forum who will represent the views of children and young people. The overall</p>

		<p>purpose of the Partnership is to provide a mechanism for engagement between key stakeholders and relevant Department and Education Authority officials. The initial meeting of this Partnership will be held shortly.</p> <p>Youth Council staff will be offered the opportunity to either transfer to the Education Authority or have access to a Voluntary Exit Scheme. Further details of the Voluntary Exit Scheme will be announced shortly.</p>
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Update on DE's publication of policy for looked after children:

<p>AQW 52946/11-16</p>	<p>Ms Claire Sugden (IND - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education for an update on the publication of his Department's policy for looked after children; and whether it will be implemented in the 2016-17 academic year.</p> <p>My officials are liaising with the Health Department to consider how we can work together effectively for the benefit of children in care. I am also keen that we continue to listen to the voice of young people in care so that we get it right in relation to improving their educational experience and outcomes. This experience should be no less than that of any other young person.</p> <p>I am aware of the upcoming OECD case study report in relation to improving the educational outcomes for Looked After Children, and I will want to take the findings into account, along with continued collaborative work with the Health Department.</p> <p>My officials will continue to develop our policy over the coming months, for implementation in the 2016/17 school year. I am determined to get it right in terms of supporting and nurturing children in care in an educational setting.</p>
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Who scrutinises ETI:

<p>AQW 52904/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Gordon Lyons (DUP - East Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education who is responsible for scrutinising the work of the Education and Training Inspectorate.</p> <p>The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), is a unitary inspectorate which provides inspection services and information about the quality of education being offered to the Department of Education (DE); the Department</p>
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		<p>of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL); and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL).</p> <p>This statutory responsibility is set out in Articles 102 and 102A of the 1986 Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order. ETI is open to scrutiny by all those for whom they provide inspection services as well as by all those whom they inspect. In addition they can be scrutinised by the Education Committee and were the subject of a Committee Inquiry in 2013.</p> <p>Independent scrutiny of the work of ETI is also provided by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency by means of questionnaires to organisations post inspection, to seek views on their experience of inspection.</p> <p>As part of the ETI's commitment to meeting the needs of its customers and stakeholders, regular monitoring is conducted on the extent to which published Customer Service Standards are met. The standards reflect the operational and organisational business and customer requirements, such as the overall quality of customer service. ETI holds the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditation with full compliances in all of the associated standards and these are subject to annual independent validation.</p>
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Number of pupils with dyslexia:

<p>AQW 52900/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Jim Allister (TUV - North Antrim)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 52553/11-16, to detail the number of pupils in primary schools with dyslexia.</p> <p>In 2014/15, there were 3,273 pupils in primary schools with dyslexia recorded as any one of their special educational needs.</p> <p>Source: NI school census</p> <p>Notes:</p> <p>The 2014/15 academic year is the most recent year that data is available. While the 2015/16 school census took place on the 9th October 2015, finalised figures will not be available until early March 2016.</p> <p>Figures for primary include nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes.</p>
<p>AQW 52899/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Jim Allister (TUV -</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 52553/11-16, to detail the number of pupils in post-primary schools with dyslexia.</p>

	<p>North Antrim)</p>	<p>In 2014/15, there were 5,770 pupils in post-primary schools with dyslexia recorded as any one of their special educational needs.</p> <p>Source: NI school census</p> <p>Notes:</p> <p>The 2014/15 academic year is the most recent year that data is available. While the 2015/16 school census took place on the 9th October 2015, finalised figures will not be available until early March 2016.</p>
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Education of pupils when missing from school due to illness:

<p>AQW 52758/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail what procedures and strategies are in place to support the education of pupils when missing from school due to illness; and at what length of absence are these procedures and strategies initiated.</p> <p>My Department issues guidance (Circular 2015/02) to schools in relation to attendance and absence recording. It recommends that every school should have an attendance policy which defines roles and responsibilities for staff, pupils and parents in relation to attendance and reporting absences. Each school should have clear procedures and pastoral care arrangements in place for long-term absentees and for re-integration back into school. This should include arrangements for continuation of education for those pupils who may be out of the classroom for lengthy periods due to illness.</p> <p>The school should refer all pupils, when attendance falls below 85%, or where there is cause for concern, to the Education Welfare Service (EWS). The EWS will provide support and advice to pupils and parents to assist them during absence and to help them return to the classroom as soon as possible.</p> <p>If pupils have extended absence due to illness which is medically certified, and where home tuition is recommended by a medical practitioner, then the EA, in co-operation with the school, would provide home education for a few hours per week. The hours offered are related to the health needs and age of the child.</p> <p>Parents should keep in regular contact with the school and all relevant information will be available via the school principal or member of staff with responsibility for pupil attendance.</p>
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<p>AQW 52757/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail what processes and strategies are in place to support pupils returning to school after illness, to ensure that educationally they reintegrate and catch up on the learning missed.</p> <p>My Department issues guidance (Circular 2015/02) to schools in relation to attendance and absence recording. It recommends that every school should have an attendance policy which defines roles and responsibilities for staff, pupils and parents in relation to attendance and reporting absences.</p> <p>As children are enrolled in school, it is the responsibility of the school to facilitate the child's re-integration. This is sometimes, but not always, based on other relevant medical information which may relate to the child's return to school, for example whether they are fit to access the full curriculum [including swimming and physical education, as well as sporting activities]</p> <p>Parents should keep in regular contact with the school and all relevant information be made available to the school principal or member of staff with responsibility for pupil attendance.</p> <p>The school should refer all pupils, where attendance falls below 85%, or where there is cause for concern, to the Education Welfare Service (EWS). The EWS will provide support and advice to pupils and parents to assist them during absence and to help them return to the classroom as soon as possible.</p>
<p>AQW 52756/11-16</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail (i) whether schools are required to notify the Education Authority of the absence of a pupil through illness; and (ii) at what stage in terms of the length of absence this notification should take place.</p> <p>A school is not always required to notify the Education Authority of a pupil absence through illness. A school may decide depending on the nature of the illness and the length of time the pupil is likely to be absent to seek support from the Education Authority</p> <p>A school is required to refer all pupils, when attendance falls below 85%, or where there is cause for concern, to the Education Welfare Service (EWS). The EWS will provide support and advice to pupils and parents to assist them during absence and to help them return to the classroom as soon as possible. The full guidance relating to schools' responsibilities, including the recording and coding of pupil absences, is set out in DE Circular 2015/02.</p>

